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A Lively Faith: Reflections on the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)/Friends for a Lifetime: The Saga of a Sixty-Three Year Quaker Love Affair

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A Lively Faith: Reflections on the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative), by Callie Marsh. Philadelphia: FSG Quaker Press, 2011. xix, 83 pp. Notes, bibliography. \$14.95 paper.

Friends for a Lifetime: The Saga of a Sixty-Three Year Quaker Love Affair, by Don and Lois Laughlin. Iowa City: Springdale Press, 2011. x, 211 pp. \$15.00 paper.

Reviewer Bill R. Douglas lives and works in Des Moines and identifies himself as a Presbyterian with Quaker tendencies. He is the author of "Penn in Technicolor: Cecil Hinshaw's Radical Pacifist-Perfectionist Experiment at William Penn College, 1944-1949" (*Quaker History*, 2007).

Callie Marsh's chief historical contribution is to provide a microhistory of Iowa Conservative Friends. Nineteenth-century Conservative Quakers would come to object to the innovative revivalism invading the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends and also to what Quaker founder George Fox called "the hireling ministry" and the programmed worship of "Friends Churches." Thomas Hamm, in *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (1988) and more compactly in an article in the *Annals of Iowa* (Spring 2002), has shown how complex Iowa Quakerism is; Marsh's achievement is to show that even minority strands are complex.

Iowa Conservative Friends would come to include English, Scottish, and Norwegian immigrants, and—a generation removed from the founding—Wilburite Friends. While in substantial agreement with other Conservative Friends, their distinctive history had a complicating effect on the meeting, Marsh suggests. Her evocation of family names and locations well situates Conservative Friends within the ethnic checkerboard that was rural Iowa.

Most of Marsh's book is a rigorous examination of whether current Conservative Friends practice can be sustained. She highlights two recent controversies. The first involved electing a clerk—the highest office of the yearly meeting—who demurred because he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. (Marsh erroneously calls this "universalism"; despite the merger of Unitarians and Universalists, the theological concepts are distinct.) The meeting's persistence in selecting him led to the resignation of several trinitarian Quakers who were unwilling to accept explicitly unitarian leadership.

The other controversy was gay marriage. Marsh's West Branch Monthly Meeting had objections. Allowing an inactive "birthright Quaker" to block the sense of the meeting is a questionable practice that Marsh partially acknowledges in a footnote. While Marsh happily reports that her meeting eventually agreed to marriage equality, I sense that the rest of the Iowa Yearly Meeting was impatient at the insistence on process over justice. Marsh concludes with a lament

about not keeping younger generations within the fold, suggesting that the meeting's premium on silence might be the culprit. But she ignores shelves of books bemoaning the same theme from denominations that prefer words.

In an intriguing joint memoir, put together by Don Laughlin after his wife's death, two West Branch Quakers partially confirm Marsh's thesis that Quakers should talk more about their faith. While not much Friends spirituality is explicit, Don's conscientious objection and post-World War II draft resistance and Lois's participation in Witness for Peace and opposition to capital punishment as a parent of a murder victim do suggest moral underpinnings that might exonerate silence. Historians of marriage before reliable birth control will also find this of value.

Brad Burns's observation that fiction writers exceed historians in portraying Iowa history seems true in this case; those wanting more insight on Iowa Conservative Quakers would be well served by reading Margaret Lacey's little-noted collection of short stories, *Silent Friends* (1992).

David Plowden's Iowa, edited by Christopher R. Rossi, with an introductory essay by Rima Girnius. Iowa City: Humanities Iowa, 2012. 99 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$20.00 paper.

Reviewer Mary Noble is catalog librarian emeritus at the University of Iowa Libraries. She is the author of *Iowa's Women Professional Photographers* (2000).

Published in association with an exhibition traveling around Iowa through 2014, this small-format volume with more than 50 of David Plowden's photographs made in the state demonstrates Plowden's interest in documenting rural landscapes as well as a variety of public and private interiors and exteriors in towns and cities that may have vanished by now or be in danger of doing so. Two views of a working steamboat in Dubuque date from 1964, and one of a Sioux City bridge is from 1969. Several are from the 1980s, including some from previously published collections; most (over 30) date from 2003 to 2009. These range from new views following familiar Plowden themes of rural grain bins and elevators to three views inside and out of Iowa's oldest prison at Fort Madison. Only one actually includes people, but almost all show environments built or altered by the state's residents over time. The book concludes with excerpts from a 2011 interview with Plowden that reveal something of his influences and working methods and explain his fascination with Iowa and the Midwest.